

Peninsula Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee

All Natural Multi-Hazards Mitigation Plan

The Peninsula Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (PHMPC), comprising of the City of Newport News, City of Hampton, City of Williamsburg, York County and James City County are participating in a planning effort to increase the region's readiness in the event of a natural disaster and maintain the region's eligibility for disaster mitigation funding available from FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA is the federal agency that assists state and local governments in recovering from disasters. Mitigation funding is provided to reduce the impacts of future disasters resulting from natural hazards, such as floods, tornadoes, and ice storms. The Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) established the requirement in October of 2000.

Following September 11, 2001, FEMA became part of the Department of Homeland Security, and additional requirements were established for communities to prepare for and respond to terrorist threats, and those planning efforts are already underway. This plan, however, is only required to address the reduction of losses from natural disasters, including droughts, blizzards and even unusual natural disasters, such as outbreaks of West Nile Virus, and possible future disasters, such as the impact of a hurricane. Each incorporated municipality within the region must participate in the planning process in order to maintain their own eligibility since each could be individually affected by a disaster. However, because the same hazards threaten many of the communities similarly, the planning can be done together.

The planning process is already underway, and will continue through the fall of 2005. You are invited to submit your comments and ideas, and attend the planning meetings. Williamsburg's point-of-contact is Lori Rierson, who can be reached at (757) 259-3760, or in writing at City of Williamsburg PHMPC, Attn: Lori Rierson - 401 Lafayette St., Williamsburg, VA. 23185, or email @ lrrierson@williamsburgva.gov. The planning progress will also be posted on each community's website.

Currently, the planning committee is identifying and quantifying the hazards that can affect the region and then information will be collected on past disasters and future potential losses. Following these initial efforts, the next step will be to identify what systems the communities within the region already have in place to lessen the impact of such disasters, such as an Emergency Management office, warning systems, floodplain regulations, land-use designations, levees, dams and building codes. Once this assessment of capabilities has been completed, the next step is to determine if the communities need to strengthen existing systems or implement new systems. These needs will become the goals of the plan.

Your input to the planning process is valuable and is welcome at any point, now or in the future. If you have suffered any disaster related losses, or have a localized problem that

may cause or aggravate losses in the future --- such as a drainage, erosion, or soils problem --- please contact Lori Rierison at (757) 259-3760.

In the coming months we will announce three formal public meetings that the Planning Team will be conducting in different locations where you can comment on the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment portion of the Plan, as well as the Goals, Mitigation Strategies and Mitigation Projects portion and the Draft Mitigation Plan portion before it is officially adopted and submitted to FEMA. Your comments, and how the Planning Team addresses them, will be recorded and included in the final plan.